

The Builder.

No. CCCCXIV.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1851.

IN London city there is movement: people all seem prosperous and busy: a good spirit is abroad, active and wider-seeing than formerly, and we venture to prognosticate, that such things will be done there one of these days as will make the world wonder and admire. With the power and revenues possessed by the corporation, they only need opinion to make London and Londoners the glory of the universe,—and that opinion is growing, though it may be slowly, and against opposition. However, we will not get on evils, purposing simply to allude to some of the works and inquiries just now going on in the City.

The new thoroughfare by way of Cannon-street is being rapidly proceeded with: the Committee, we understand, have determined that the houses shall be all cleared away, and the street be paved through by the coming May-day, which, it is to be expected, will stand in history in opposition to the "Evil May-day" of 1517, as the "Good May-day" of 1851. Just opposite St. Swithin's Church and London Stone, an ancient vault, or crypt, of considerable length, was opened, and still remains so. It has stone cross-springers, forming a pointed arch, and is vaulted with chalk. The city architect, Mr. Bunning, who has ever manifested a most laudable desire to save such remnants and marks of Old London as fall within his control, will doubtless interfere for the preservation of as much of it as may be practicable, and will map its position for the benefit of topographical investigators. The new road, when opened, will relieve the narrow gorge known as the Poultry,* but will not effect all that is needed in that respect.

The conjoint station at London-bridge, or rather the assemblage of stations, for we have here the Brighton, the South-Eastern (including the North Kent), and the Greenwich, is fast approaching completion. Its appearance, as a whole, is anything but an improvement on that of the old Brighton station. The central buildings belong to the South-Eastern; the Brighton is on the south side; and the Greenwich is put somewhat out of the way, next Tooley-street. There is a covered way, on iron columns, around the South-Eastern, which is glazed to the extent of the pathway, so as not to darken the rooms on the ground-floor. A portion of the covering projects beyond the line of the columns, so as to further screen the pathway from rain: this is solid, with a high cornice and fascia, and there seeming to be nothing to balance it (the rest of the covering being of glass, as already mentioned), it has not a pleasing effect. We must find, fault, too, with the cement decorations of the central clock, which seem to us coarse and heavy. The architect (Mr. Beazley) would probably show that the faults were the executioner's. The departure and arrival platforms have a wooden roof of large span (nearly 100 feet we should say), mentioned some time since. A considerable portion of the covering is of "rough plate glass," in sheets, 8 feet

long, and 3 feet 6 inches wide. Such spaces between the principals as are not glazed are plastered and panelled. Rough plate glass offers great facilities for roofing.

The front of the Brighton Station has stone dressings, but little beauty. The booking-office, which is ill-shaped (perhaps unavoidably so), has a large circular light in the ceiling.

As we left the station the other day, we had a striking evidence of the want of some such arrangement for crossing from one side of London Bridge to the other, as that proposed by Mr. Dawson, and already alluded to by us: a mass of vehicles jammed up the road, and rendered crossing impossible for at least half-an-hour, and even then only with danger. We understand that a memorial to the Common Council, praying them to form a tunnel from one side of the road to the other, as proposed, has been signed by 2,000 persons.

We have repeatedly deplored the erection of the structure, called Hibernia Chambers, at the foot of the bridge on the west side, as blocking up the river banks, and have shown how one step of that sort leads to another. The evil is still growing. Adjoining the building in question, a large structure is now being erected farther westward.

It is not to be expected that individuals having rights will yield them to their own loss; but it behoves the authorities to make such arrangements with individuals as may tend to the general good.

From the time of the great fire, the importance of keeping open and embanking the river side has been urged. Charles the Second, in his proclamation forbidding rebuilding in the City previous to general arrangements being made, provided for a quay on the river side, and set forth that buildings should not be erected next the river within certain limits. In that same reign an Act "For rebuilding the City of London" was passed, which sets forth "that no house, outhouse, or other building whatever (cranes and sheds for immediate use alone excepted) shall be built or erected within 40 feet of such part of any wall, quay, or wharf, as abounds the river Thames, from Tower Wharf to London Bridge, and from London Bridge to the Temple Stairs." This will serve to show the opinion entertained then on a subject whereon none can differ now, except in cases where their own private interest may be concerned.

Nowhere is a fine river so ill-treated as in London,—its banks degraded, and its bed befouled: in return it has often produced disease and misery, where otherwise it would have given health and pleasure: "And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

Looking from London-bridge into the pool, one may well ask—

"Where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so thronged?"

From here, too, the City's spires and towers, St. Paul's, also, somewhat in the distance, are seen to advantage, and the throng of pedestrians and crush of carriages,—a flood of life and energy,—conspire to give an idea of the immensity and importance of the modern Babylon.

As we returned, St. Paul's came nearer to us, and looking in, at the cost of twopence, we observed that workmen are now painting white the stonework of the nave. We may say, as to the outside, that all that the dean and chapter required the corporation to do at the gates to the churchyard previously to opening

them during the day to the public is finished, and that the public now wait the fulfilment of the arrangement on the part of the chapter. In the amended "City Sewers Bill," the Commissioners have introduced a clause (45) which provides that the ground, area, and space, in the west front of St. Paul's Cathedral, may be laid into the public street, and that it shall be lawful for the commissioners to act and to agree with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Bishop of London, and the Lord Mayor of London, and the trustees for the fabric of the cathedral, for such purpose. This is to provide for the hoped-for improvement.

We alluded just now, in passing, to the health of the City, as affected by the befouling of the Thames. Let us mention, in connection with this subject, the recent report of their medical officer, Mr. Simons, an able document, deserving the most serious consideration. Mr. Simons says, that during the fifty-two weeks, dated from Sept. 30, 1849, to Sept. 26, 1850, there died of the population in the City, 2,752 persons. The rate of mortality, estimated from these data, for a population of 125,500, would indicate somewhat less than twenty-two deaths (21.92) out of every 1,000 living persons. Last year, from the ravages of pestilence, the death-rate reached the alarming height of thirty in the 1,000.

The decrease, beyond that to be referred to the absence of cholera, he attributes in no slight degree to sanitary measures. He maintains "That the main conditions which constitute the unhealthiness of towns are definite, palpable, removable evils; that dense overcrowding of a population; that intricate ramification of courts and alleys, excluding light and air; that defective drainage; that the products of organic decomposition; that contaminated water and a stinking atmosphere—are distinct causes of disease and death; that each admits of being definitely estimated in its numerical proportion to the total mortality which it contributes to cause; that each is susceptible of abatement or removal, which will at once be followed by diminution of its alleged effects upon the health of the population."

With reference to the conditions determining the local preference shown by the cholera, there are the following striking observations:—he says,

"If you now look to the disease as it raged within your own jurisdiction, you will observe its fatality in two especial directions. First, in the line I have indicated to you, northward from Blackfriars-bridge, in a band of two or three hundred yards width: there, in the parallelogram which lies along the main road, from Stonecutter-street to Bridewell Hospital, were 76 deaths; there, in the little clump of houses, forming the angle of Farringdon-street and Holborn-hill, were 17 deaths; there, in a square space behind twenty-seven shop-fronts in Fleet-street, were 57 deaths; there, in the small parish of St. Ann's, Blackfriars, were deaths at the rate of 25 to every 1,000 of its population. This was incomparably the most afflicted portion of your territory. Those who are acquainted with the ancient geography of the City will readily conjecture a reason; they will remember when 'the course of water running at London under Old-bourne Bridge and Fleet Bridge, into the Thames, was of such breadth and depth that 10 or 12 ships, naves at once with merchandise, were wont to come to the foreshed bridge of Fleet, and some of them unto Old-bourne Bridge; they will remember how this broad river (like the Thames of our day) was thronged on both sides with population; how (again like the Thames) it was a draining river, probably with wide banks of petrifying mud; how many fruitless attempts were made to cleanse and

* So called because of the poultrymen, who assemble there.

* See p. 431, Vol. VIII.